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AUTHOR	Turnage, Martha
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ABSTRACT

Before a community college can make an impact on the community, there must be an understanding of the milieu of the community and a shared commitment to the college's mission. To be effective, the college must provide direction to and receive direction from its constituents. A survey was conducted among approximately 15,000 adults in the service area of Mountain Empire Community College in Virginia to ascertain the quality of life of the people. Most of the students are first-generation college students from small high schools who did not participate in many high school activities. Most of them work and get financial aid. Coal is the only major industry in the area, a fact that slows community development and leadership. A substantial percentage of families fall in the poverty level. A sizeable number of residents are not community participants. The college has a number of older students, and there are a substantial number of public school dropouts in the area that the college could reach. The college is beginning continuing education classes for adults with five mobile classrooms. In spite of the community service and continuing education emphasis, the regular instructional program is still central to the college's function. An analysis of social and educational trends is necessary in order for the college to be responsive. Charting an effective course would be helped by a clear mission statement, community field experiences for the faculty, and a series of community days through the school year for discussions among faculty, community people, and students. (KM)

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MOUNTAIN EMPIRE: THE COMMUNITY'S COLLEGE

By Martha Turnage
Dean, Student and Community Services

Mountain Empire Community College
Big Stone Gap, Virginia

JC 730 152

Rationale for the Community Services thrust to be taken by the College beginning July, 1973

Presented to faculty, April 24, 1973

MOUNTAIN EMPIRE: THE COMMUNITY'S COLLEGE
By Martha Turnage

The reality of the relationship between community colleges and their environment will ultimately determine, in my opinion, whether these institutions, over 1,000 strong, will be recognized historically as America's unique contribution to higher education.

For a community college to be what it is because of where it is, there must be an inter-penetration of the life of the community and the life of the college. (This view is shared by Dr. George B. Vaughan, President of Mountain Empire Community College, and Dr. James A. Carter, Dean of Instruction. They have both endorsed the statements made in this paper, and the position it takes.) Before a community college can expect to make an impact on the community, two conditions must exist within the institution:

1) An understanding of the milieu of the community;

2) A shared commitment to the mission of the college.

How an institution allocates resources, authority, and priorities is indicative of the authenticity of its institutional goals. These allocations measure the accountability of the community services' commitment.

With its diversity of students, programs, and services, community colleges without a clear understanding of their mission find themselves attempting to be all things to all people. This lack of direction has been

strongly chastized by critics of community colleges. In Dateline '79, Art Cohen stated:

> It is unreasonable to expect that the institutions will continue to be supported indefinitely without a clearer definition of their effects on students and their contributions to community life. 1

Leland L. Medsker charges that:

> Forces from both within and without (community colleges) are raising many questions concerning both their structure and their program, and the recognition they have gained could be lost unless they demonstrate unusual flexibility and adaptability in a period of rapid social change. 2

In the Virginia Community College System a statewide mission statement is inherent in the listing of the comprehensive programs: occupational-technical, university parallel, general and continuing adult education, special training programs, developmental programs, and specialized regional and community services. These generally extend not more than two years beyond high school level. Underlying these programs is the open door admissions policy, and the commitment to equal educational opportunities.

Mission of the College:

Given a statewide system of community colleges, is it possible for an individual college to express its uniqueness through its own mission statement? Does the system allow the latitude for Northern Virginia Community College with its multi-campus complex, and Mountain Empire Community College, serving

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[1] Arthur M. Cohen, Dateline '79: Heretical Concepts for the Community College (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Glencoe Press, 1969),p. xvii.

[2] David S. Bushnell, Organizing for Change: New Priorities for Community Colleges(New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. xvi

an area of 1,600 square miles of largely undeveloped land, to share the same philosophic base, yet structure its program quite differently to respond to its location?

YES -- provided there is within the institution a shared understanding of and commitment to the unique mission of the individual college. Here at Mountain Empire Community College, each of us defines the mission of this College from our own experience and perspective. We have a partial idea of the expectations of others. Until these fragmented expectations are synthesized into the mission of the total College, it is my opinion that we will not make a significant impact on the area as an educational institution.

A mission statement must be broad enough to encompass all functions of the College. It must be definitive enough to delineate its uniqueness. The following ideas might be a starting point in the development of such a mission statement for this comprehensive community college:

> Mountain Empire Community College, in the process of fulfilling its role as an educational institution, serves as a catalyst for student and community development. As equa. educational opportunities are extended to all segments of the post-secondary age population in its service area, the social, economic, and cultural environment is enriched and expanded. Located in the Appalachian Region of Southwest Virginia, the College is committed to the preservation and teaching of the heritage of the area, at the same time it equips its students for the competition of the labor market.

This or any other attempt to verbalize a statement of mission is significant only to the extent that the entire College can be related to it, and integrated into a multi-dimensional institutional thrust.

The key that synthesizes the diversity of a community college is the recognition given the word "community" in its name. A college that determines to be WHAT it is because of WHERE it is -- not a college that could be located Anywhere, U. S. A. -- is a real community's college.

This kind of inter-penetration of college and community is a radical departure from the norm for institutions of higher education in this country. Traditionally, their mode of operation has been viewed as a priori, like sacred laws written on tablets of stone handed down from generation to generation. In analyzing the situation, it seems to me that educators who never come down from the tower see the purpose of education as that of "telling people what they need for their own good." They never have to wonder if the solutions they propose are solutions to the wrong problems. These educators never understand why students of all ages enter the "open door" eagerly and expectantly, only to turn away disappointed and disillusioned.

It is an awesome responsibility to lay claim to being a community college. It means that the college must bring together people and their vested interests, and stimulate them to identify common concerns. As people search for solutions contextually in the community setting, they will begin to ask the appropriate questions to which the college should respond.

Community Services Defined:

At Mountain Empire Community College, community services is defined as:

> the continuous process of bringing together the total resources of the college and the community to enhance the educational development of the student, the community, the college.

If this definition is sound, its implications should be manifest in the total educational process of the College. Specifically, these are outlined in the procedures accepted by the faculty and approved by the Local Board for developing the College program based on a community orientation. Under this organizational plan, the Dean of Community Services is the chief administrative officer for implementation of community services for Mountain Empire Community College.

It is essential in the development of this community services program that we understand the meanings of the procedures as outlined in our organizational structure:

I. Understanding our community and its people.

II. Understanding our own mission as a community college and realizing our limitations as well as our resources.

III. Recognizing the resources of the community and utilizing these resources.

IV. Relating the regular instructional courses to the community and viewing the community as a laboratory.

V. Development of specific courses and activities to meet community needs.

Should the College <u>provide direction to</u> or <u>receive direction from</u> its constituents? If we are to do an effective job of designing our educational response, we must do both. If we are to fulfill the change agent function, we must comprehend the implications of the servant-leader dichotomy[3] in assessing our role. Can you lead effectively unless you also serve? There is a great difference between providing answers for

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[3] Brian Donnelly, "The Community College -- Servant or Leader?", Community Service Conference Workshop, University of Maine at Bangor, Bangor, Maine, July, 1972.

people and getting people to find their own answers.

Through our Survey project, we have conducted home interviews with approximately 15,000 adults in our service area to ascertain the quality of life of the people. By discovering how citizens view their communities and their places in them, we can predict trends and help set direction. We can establish priorities and set boundaries within which we can develop a community services program that maximizes the utilization of our resources of time, talent and energy. Otherwise, we will exhaust ourselves answering the inundation of requests which leave one wondering what to do for an encore.

In compiling the Survey data, we will identify the many communities and groups we must learn to serve effectively. We will know some of their dreams and frustrations, but more importantly, be able to identify the barriers that have held them back from self-improvement through education.

The Community and the College:

"How can we help people help themselves?" As an educational institution this is the searching question we must answer in order to become the community's college. This question cannot be answered until we do understand our community and its people. This is a particularly relevant question in this region because of the out-migration of young people, the older age structure of the population with the heavy income dependancy (20%) on social security, retirement pensions and other transfer payments, and the potential for the development of tourism.

Our service area of Lee, Scott, Wise, the western portion of Dickenson Counties and the City of Norton is a land of strange paradoxes. It is a land of breath-taking beauty and irresponsible abuse; a land of cadillacs

and abject poverty; a land of limited formal education and great wisdom; a land with a rich heritage and few who appreciate it.

Demographic data from our entering class reflect the following student profile: Of the beginning full-time students in September, 1972, only 40 percent entered directly from high school. They came from small communities, with 75 percent graduating from high schools with less than 200 in the senior class. They came from blue collar families or farming families, with 41 percent of their parents earning their living in a semi-skilled or skilled job. Ninety-one percent of our entering Freshman Class were first generation college students. (Nationwide community college students are generally first generation college students. The national average is 71 per cent.) Twenty-seven percent of the entering freshmen indicated they expected to complete a bachelor's or above degree. Nineteen percent of our full-time students are married. As far as high school activities are concerned, 52 percent held no major office in a high school organization. In measuring their lack of interest in student organizations and activities, they range from a negative 88 percent to a negative 53. Reading from the least interest to less interest, in order, they are: Ethnic or racial organization, debating drama and public speaking, religious organization, para-professional club, musical activity, political organization, student government, social or school spirit activities, journalism or literary activities, athletic activities. This shows you why development of student life on a commuter campus is an elusive situation, and the reasons are many. Our student body is not made up of participants in the star system--65 percent of them came either because

Mountain Empire Community College was close to home, less expensive or offered the specific training they sought. Fifty-four percent work, and over 50 percent are on financial aid.[4]

Economy of the Area:

In the economic picture of our service area, coal is the only major industry. "Black gold" has dominated the economy and life style of the region since the latter part of the 19th century. Characteristic of single industry communities is the lack of community development apart from "the company." In recent years in this extreme tip of Southwest Virginia, there are signs of changing social and economic relationships. It behooves the College to keep a finger on the pulse of these trends, and alter the curricula accordingly. Local governments develop slowly where there is a mono-power structure. Community organizations tend to exercise little civic leadership.

The fact that the Lonesome Pine Development Corporation in February, 1973, identified 3,000 persons who received their income directly or indirectly through the anit-poverty programs it operated gives another look at the economy. Through the funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity and other sources, 23 different projects were operated with approximately three and one-half million dollars added to the local economy each year. The impact of the phasing out of these programs has not been felt to the fullest, particularly in Lee County.

While the per capita and median family income in the three-county area suggest a general level of well-being throughout the region according to the

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[4]Comparative Guidance and Placement Program, Summary Report 1972 Entrants, (Sample Size - 244). Administered in September, 1972.

Virginia Planning District Number 1, serving the counties of Lee, Wise, Scott, and the City of Norton (LENOWISCO), the percentage of poverty level family units reflect an area of "have's" and "have not's." Lee County has the highest percentage of poverty in the state, with 39.5 percent poverty in 1970. Scott and Wise Counties were 26.9 percent and 27.1 percent respectively in 1970. On the plus side, the region has decreased these percentages by 50 percent since 1960. This is symbolic of the new life in the region.

On the brighter side of the economic picture, there are evidences of growth in pockets over the entire area. LENOWISCO has identified these growth pockets in its land use plan (Western Lee County, Pennington Gap and Jonesville, Gate City-Weber City, Nicklesville, Big Stone Gap-Powell Valley, Wise, Norton, Coeburn, and Duffield).[5] Industrial parks are beginning to be developed as communities realize the services needed to attract industry. The educational role of Mountain Empire Community College and the Special Training Division of the State Department of Community Colleges are important ingredients in this change. Currently we are involved in the training program for potential employees of the new hospital. Our occupational-technical programs are a means of raising the skill profile of the region in production and service industries. Bruce K. Robinette, executive director of LENOWISCO, says that "economic and population loss can be halted and reversed with integrated planning."[6]

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[5]LENOWISCO (Lee-Norton-Wise-Scott) Planning District Commission of Virginia, Land Use Plan-1990, Vol. I.

[6]Bruce K. Robinette, LENOWISCO Land Use Plan Hearing, Powell Valley High School, March 27, 1973.

There are other statistical data we must assimilate, like the labor force participation rate. To maintain a healthy economy, it should be at 34 percent. According to the LENOWISCO Land Use Plan, it was 21.4 for the total area in 1967.[7] Data notwithstanding, this tells the College that there are a lot of people out there who are potential workers in the labor force who are not participating. There are also a large number of young people who will be entering the labor force within the next few years. Unless new jobs are created, this skilled and educated segment of the population will have to leave the area to find suitable employment. If we are serious in our institutional commitment to stop the brain drain of our talented youth, we must be concerned with creation of the kind of total community environment that will offer them opportunities here for growth. Our high school survey last Spring indicated that 88 percent would like to stay if they could find the opportunities here.

In identification of leadership in the MECC service area, names of the same individuals appear on surveys from LENOWISCO, the Educational Cooperative for Public Education, serving Dickenson, Lee, Scott and Wise Counties and the City of Norton (DILENOWISCO), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI and SU), and MECC.

Management seminars held in the Spring of 1972, and a VPI and SU problem identification study both spotlighted lack of motivation by the general population as a major deterrent to community development.

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[7] LENOWISCO (Lee-Norton-Wise-Scott) Planning District Commission of Virginia, Land Use Plan-1990, Vol. I.

The People

These data matched with our Survey results show a picture of apathy and lack of motivation that should concern us greatly.

These studies indicate a sizeable number of people who are not community participants. They do not belong to organized groups. They appear to live lives with little expectancy. What is at the root of this? Much of what we see emerging in the Survey seems to be expressions of a feeling of helplessness-- little feeling of control over one's destiny. A member of the College-Technical Advisory Committee sees the College as "the catalyst around which hope can be built for these people."[8]

We are products of our socioeconomic background. These factors must be understood if appropriate learning experiences are to be designed with motiva[illegible]d study habits in mind. It is with this kind of knowledge that faculty and administration of this college can build strategies for helping students to learn. The backgrounds, characteristics and environment that shape the interests, career goals and values of our students must be taken into account as we plan for them.

A strong advocate of the value of a cross-section of the population attending class together in a community college is Edmund Gleazer, Executive Secretary of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. He said, "Interaction of age groups can have much more social significance than is commonly recognized."[9] Sensitive instructors realize that nothing makes a greater contribution to the concept of self worth and examination of

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[8]George Hunnicutt, Occupational-Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, April 4, 1973.

[9]Edmund Gleazer. "The Community College Should Be There-In the Community," Community Service Conference Workshop, University of Maine at Bangor, Bangor, Maine, July, 1972.

vocational alternatives (currently labeled Career Education) than the cross-cultural, intergenerational composition of classes in a community college. I believe the age diversity in a community college is one of the most enriching and stimulating experiences on the campus.

Mountain Empire Community College is in the unique position of having the older students set the pace in many classes. In the 1972 winter quarter, 214 of the 506 students were over 25 years of age. These older students are demonstrating (according to many of our faculty) that the longer a student has to wait to obtain a college education, the higher value he will place on it. In our service area, only 25 percent of the residents have completed high school. Among the parents of our students, 55 percent of the fathers and 50 percent of the mothers have less than a high school education.

According to the DILENOWISCO analysis of the educational climate of the area, the drop-out rate between grades 1-12, in Lee County is 65 percent, in Scott it is 58 percent.[10] This situation improves considerably in high school, indicating the latter elementary grades as the peak attrition period. In 1970 the drop-out rate between grades 9-12 for our service area was: Lee County 36.5 percent, Scott County 22.5 percent, Wise County 23.8 percent, Dickenson County 28 percent, City of Norton 29.2 percent.[11] In the recent past, a number of catch-up and remedial programs have been funded by the Federal government to combat this low median education level. Among these have been the Four I's program, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and the Urban-Rural Development program. What an untapped source of students for MECC to reach and teach.

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[10]DILENOWISCO, "Proposal for Exemplary Project in Vocational Education," December, 1972, p. 8.

[11]Facing Up, State Department of Education, 1973 (Richmond, Virginia) pp. 28-31.

Continuing Education for Adults:

Against the background of everything we can learn about the mindset and milieu of our service area, this college now faces the challenge of creative utilization of five "Learning-in-Transit" buses. These mobile classrooms can extend this college to the fartherest reaches of these 1,600 square miles if the faculty and staff accept the challenge. (President George B. Vaughan and Dean of Instruction Dr. James A. Carter believe in the extension of the college into the service area enough to let go a traditional college structure and commit the resources of the college to community services.)

The Virginia Advisory Legislative Council report to the General Assembly in 1970 included the following recommendations:

> Continuing education efforts should be closely coordinated with regular degree programs to the end that standards of quality for both are comparable; efforts should be made to offer programs which answer the specific needs of the communities in which they are to be offered. [12]

In this same stance, continuing education classes will be taught throughout our service area by our regular faculty. The instructional goals will be comparable to those of courses taught on campus, but there will be more alternative ways of achieving them.

The President's Commission on Non-Traditional Study warns existing colleges not to open their doors to adult students unless they are willing to develop workable plans to be responsive to them. The Commission reports that what these adults want to learn, and where they want to learn it is seldom

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[12]The Virginia Advisory Legislative Council Report to the General Assembly, 1970.

satisfied by the regular course schedule on the college campus. In fact 80 percent of the adults indicate they would rather learn it someplace other than the college campus.[13]

The national picture shows that enrollment in adult education is increasing by 11 percent a year, compared with a dropping enrollment of the traditional college age youth, according to the April 2 issue of U. S. World News and Report of this year.[14] In the MECC service area, the potential is even greater because of the low median education level of eighth grade as compared with eleventh in the State as a whole. Because of the disproportionate size of the undereducated adult population, a consultant who is used frequently by the College is Dr. Wayne Schroeder, head of the Department of Adult Education at Florida State. Dr. Schroeder helped design the Survey instrument, and will continue to serve as our consultant in designing our response to it, both through the total community services program, and utilization of the "Learning-in-Transit" buses.

The time -- the place -- the means are at hand for Mountain Empire Community College to penetrate the region it serves with the opportunities for education that the people have missed. The "Learning-in-Transit" project is a moment in history for this region. We are privileged to share the vision and the pain of the birth of this project. It will be very difficult to implement, but it is worth doing. People may not trust us at first -- they may come on board the buses initially only from curiosity. I believe they will not return to learn unless they become convinced that we care, and that we have something to share that they want. As we become

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[13]Recommendations of Commission on Non-Traditional Study, The Chronicle of Higher Education, February 5, 1973, p. 6.

[14]"Back to School for Millions of Adults," U. S. World News and Report, April 2, 1973, pp. 73-74.

involved in this inter-penetration of college and community, there is no way we as a college can fail to grow in our understanding of the educational process as it applies to our particular situation. Many of the first takers on the buses will be women who always wanted more education, or those who are wondering how soon their husbands' jobs will be obsolete, or older citizens who no longer feel needed or useful. Other adults who would not invade these halls on the hills might talk to someone on the bus parked down in a shopping center about trying to learn a salable skill. Every faculty member on a bus will need to be a counselor, advisor, facilitator. It should be possible to discuss a potential student's educational goals with him, and through a simplified admissions procedure, enroll him in the college on the spot. The buses parked in towns throughout our service area will be the College.

These are the kinds of understandings we at the College must absorb and respond to before we can claim to be a real community college. While it is important to prepare course objectives and to package courses, these are merely tools for instruction. Though they enable students to progress at their own rate of speed, they do not help instructors empathize with students, and find ways of giving them more positive self images. A sense of purpose should be the motivating force of our total instructional program. A sharp perception of the particular problems and challenges of our region will cause us to want to bring "together the total resources of the college and the community to enhance the educational development of the student, the community, the college." (Community Services definition)

Regular Instructional Program:

What should be the relationship of community services to the instructional program of the college? Perhaps we can best answer this question by asking other questions: How is our regular instructional program influenced by the location of Mountain Empire Community College? Can we identify adjustments and changes that have been made this year to make the regular instructional program more compatible with our location? How have our students caused us to restructure our courses? What were our mistaken assumptions? How is the curricula oriented to the job opportunities in our service area? Does community services play a part in changing or orienting the curricula to the community?

Brian Donnelly of the University of Newfoundland had this to say at the Bangor, Maine, Conference on Community Services in the United States and Canada:

> Curriculum is the link between students and transformation in the community. If we think about that, community services must be doing a tremendous amount to provide for student change through the curriculum and for community transformation, but not simply through some adjunct courses, non-credit courses and the like. The community services program is the heart of the institution in attempting to bring what the specific needs of the community are to the curriculum so that the rest of the people in the college are being reminded what the needs of the community are -- what the community is -- so that every course can be ordered in a unique way because of the community. [15]

With the apparent emphasis on the older students, there is a real danger that the traditional college student will decide that he has no place at Mountain Empire Community College. This would be tragic, for these are the students who furnish the base of our operation, who give

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[15]Donnelly, Community Service Conference Workshop.

us enthusiasm and optimism. They want to make contributions to this institution beyond being told to clean up the Snack Bar. Development of a sense of pride comes from a sense of shared ownership. Our Student Government is agonizing through birth pangs; so are the student organizations. The students are asking to be involved beyond "Mickey Mouse" functions. They are floundering because they can't seem to find their role here. All of us have experienced this in our own situations, and certainly students who have not held leadership positions before are even more lost than we were. It is through their classes that these students initially find themselves here. Faculty members are vital to their feeling of identity, and development of a sense of purpose. You are the "significant other" for many of our students who are trying to discover "who they are."

Arthur M. Cohen, in his analysis of the difficulties of developing a viable community services program, precludes that it is too splintered and segmented to make a significant impact. He says that the instructional program is central in the college's function, and is the closest approximation to community.[16] It is precisely at the point of the instructional program that the new organizational plan Mountain Empire Community College penetrates. Any other approach to community services is adjunct, and should in fact be peripheral and auxiliary. We are, after all, an educational institution. A community college is not a social agency, though social change must be paramount in its educational program.

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[16]Arthur M. Cohen, "The Twilight Future of a Function," The Community Services Catalyst, Fall, 1972, pp. 7-16.

As a college, we will not be able to lead the community until we learn to serve it. What we learn from it may be far more important that what we give. Albeit, we must view our service area in the context of trends of the larger society; otherwise, we will become provincial and in-grown. Societal trends in education we need to identify are:

(1) The impact of new technology on occupations indicate that the average twenty-year old man employed today will probably change jobs six or seven times in his lifetime, thereby making obsolete the idea of training for a career, and highlighting the necessity of training for a cluster of careers.

(2) Recent changes in Federal financial aid legislation, incorporating benefits for part-time students, will free previously home-bound mothers to attend college. This coupled with the income tax deductions allowed for "sitters" for children of employed mothers will see an even more rapid increase in the current trend of women to re-enter educational programs.

(3) Recent and projected legislation support educational opportunities for the returning veteran. (The MECC service area should be a prime target for veteran recruitment, since approximately 450 Vietnam era veterans have returned to this area.)

(4) No longer does this year's high school senior who is "college material" look at college as a lock-step process. Many are taking several years between high school and college. Only "the blue collar family, and the minorities" hold the traditional view of a college degree. Other students are finding that college isn't the only way to get an education.[17]

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[17] U. S. World News and Report, April 23, 1973, p. 44.

(5) Previously disenfranchised groups such as the elderly, the physically disabled and prisoners are no longer content to be "counted out" in higher education.

(6) Adult education programs are being demanded by the Virginia General Assembly in response to a national trend.

The composite of these trends results in a much closer tie between students and communities than previously existed. The "eighteen to eighty" story becomes a reality in increasing numbers, rather than just a good feature story for the newspaper. All indications are that the non-traditional students will compose an increasingly larger percentage of the community college student body as time goes on.

The college must be able to respond to the conflicting demands of the students it will serve. Some will be disadvantaged, some last year's high school seniors, some older, many part-time, some leading the struggle for broadening the economic base, and some clinging to the status quo, all expecting the college to be what they want it to be.

There is no way we can be all things to all people. Without recognizing our resources and our limitations as an institution, we can not establish credibility in the community. According to Warren Bennis, president of the University of Cincinnati, "Now, as the flow of resources and students dries up, colleges and universities are forced for the first time to determine what is essential and what is expendable."[18] We do not have the luxury of time that older institutions have had to make this determination. We must chart our course even as we are struggling to become.

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[18]Warren G. Bennis, "View From the Top," Cincinnati Horizons, April, 1973, p. 19.

By developing a mission statement that clearly establishes our thrust, then setting our goals and priorities accordingly, we can make realistic decisions. Otherwise, we will be blown in a new direction with each succeeding change of the wind currents.

As a means of preparation for the Community Services thrust, the faculty of Mountain Empire Community College could learn much in field experiences in the communities we serve. An in-service training course taught by people working in the area would give insights not found in census data. For example, how valuable it would be to hear about the problems, concerns and trends from a LENOWISCO planner, a banker, an industrialist, a social agency director, a local historian, a public educator. These are the people who could help us understand the complexities of our task. As each of us, in our own roles, gains a broader perspective of the community, we will automatically incorporate this material into instruction, using the community as a laboratory. We will, in fact, become a community-centered, student-oriented education institution.

In his initial address to the faculty, upon the opening of Mountain Empire Community College, Dr. Vaughan said:

> To talk about our commitment to students is, of course, to talk about our very existence. However, I would like to make one more point as to how we might aid our students in helping them to prepare for their future. We need to create a sensitivity in our students which will allow them to respond to their environment. This, to me, means that we cannot offer the students simple answers to complex problems. You can offer some very good theories on how a town should be operated. The students will probably applaud your efforts. I, too, would agree with your theories. Yet the student who lives in a town with an inadequate tax structure, a dearth of leadership, and a great deal of apathy might indeed find your theories hollow. But in what I will refer to as the "sensitizing process" you must make the student aware of the fact that governments can be improved if others are shown the need for the improvements and given some suggestions as to how they may be accomplished. To put in simple language and to plaglarize from

> one of my professional colleagues, we must teach the students "to see the trash alongside the road." I believe that once the students "see the trash" they will begin to see solutions and through the "sensitizing process" will react and help bring about changes. [19]

Our students are slowly becoming aware of themselves as adults. Hopefully we see the beginnings of what will ultimately become a Student Volunteer Corps. As our students relate to their home communities, and begin to learn how they can draw on the resources to help solve problems, they will become ambassadors of change.

A series of "Community Days," scattered throughout the school year, would bring faculty, community folk, and students together in brainstorming sessions with outside specialist. Time could be spent openly discussing problems we all know exist, but no one talks about -- strip mining, welfare rolls, unemployment, illiteracy, preservation of scenic beauty.

For this area to grow, more of its citizens must become involved. In his overview of the service area, MECC Research Director Kurt Gottschalk stated:

> The college should provide an open forum for the exchange of an uncensored spectrum of ideas and experiences. The rich diversity of backgrounds of students, faculty, and administration should be utilized to the fullest extent in promoting such interaction. [20]

Think how exciting this type of forum would be if it could take place in an atmosphere of acceptance and freedom, without fear of reprisal.

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[19]Dr. George B. Vaughan, President, "Mountain Empire Community College: An Emerging Concept," Opening Address to Freshman Class, September 11, 1972.

[20]Kurt Gottschalk, "Socio-Economic Survey of Mountain Empire Community College," p. 15.

Ervin L. Harlacher, one of the pioneers in community services programs says:

> While education formerly concentrated its efforts primarily on changing the student in his relationship with himself (skills) for self-improvement), it must now provide him with the information and skills that contribute to social improvement. The community college must seek out and educate all sorts of potential leaders -- those in the upper, middle, and lower classes -- and teach them to become ceaselessly involved in public affairs. [21]

Faculty of this college cannot alone change this area. But you can affect change by influencing the students you teach. A few businessmen cannot. They can only open doors to more alternatives. But -- our students can change the area. They are the people who will make the significant impact on the quality of life in Southwest Virginia. They are where the future begins. Ours is the job of preparing our students to step into positions of leadership in this area. Here at Mountain Empire Community College is where they must be given the opportunity to learn to lead. No one can doubt that this is a challenge worthy of the commitment of all of us, individually, and collectively. An atmosphere can exist within this institution which will awaken and empower our students, regardless of age or socioeconomic status, to become truly alive. When among ourselves we become a community, in touch with one another, Mountain Empire Community College will be an exciting and memorable experience for all who cross its Threshold. Only then will we have the foundation upon which to build the community's college.

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[21]Ervin L. Harlacher. The Community Dimension of the Community College, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969, p. 77.